



Daily News/DEVON RAVINE

Spectators at Armed Forces Appreciation Day cheer the Air Force's Tops In Blue group Saturday afternoon at the Northwest Florida Fairgrounds.

'We are all in this together'



Residents turn out to show their support for the Armed Forces

By AMBER BOLLMAN

Daily News Staff Writer

When the final chords of Lee Greenwood's patriotic anthem "God Bless the U.S.A." echoed through the crowd at the Northwest Florida Fairgrounds Saturday night,

Niceville resident John Johnson was on his feet. A retired U.S. Air Force surgeon who served his country for more than 22 years, Johnson, who suffers from Parkinson's disease, spent much of Armed Forces Appreciation Day seated in his wheelchair.

But when Greenwood began his final song,

which has become a rallying cry and source of inspiration for the nation since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, Johnson rose proudly.

Standing with the help of two longtime friends and wearing a T-shirt bearing the image of Old Glory, Johnson — along with hundreds more active duty servicemen, veterans and civilians who gathered Saturday to pay tribute to the U.S. military — held an American flag high into the night sky.

"It's nice to hear people so happy to have the military around because I've been lots of places where they weren't so fond of us," said Johnson,

Please see SUPPORT/A6

Above, Lee Greenwood entertains the crowd at Saturday's Armed Forces Appreciation Day with a number of patriotic songs, including the famous "God Bless the U.S.A."

At right, Staff Sgt. Richard Stone of Hurlburt Field's 16th Security Forces Squadron watches as Jayd Cheshire, 7, gets an up-close look at a Humvee-mounted M-60 machine gun during Saturday's Armed Forces Appreciation Day.

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